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Instead of the eleven measurements of Bertillon he takes but one, that of the body length, and seems to rely very largely upon the facial characteristics, the contour of the face, the color of the eyes, shape and direction of the eyebrows, nose, mouth, chin, and ears. The distinctive marks and scars are carefully noted and referred in location to the subdivisions of the body, of which over a hundred are given. Thumb-marks are also taken and preserved as a means of identification. Directions for taking photographs are also given.

Señor Vucetich's system has not, of course, been in use long enough to afford a practical test of its efficiency, but there can be no doubt, if his directions are carried out with a care approaching to that with which they are framed, his plan must prove successful.

This work and the introduction of such a system are evidences of the enlightened progress of the Argentine Republic.

C. H. A.

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*The Education of the Central Nervous System: A Study of Foundations, especially of Sensory and Motor Training. By Reuben Post Halleck, M. A. (Yale). New York: The Macmillan Co. Price, \$1.00.*

This is a pleasantly written book, made up mainly of excerpts and didactic discussion. The author appears not to have undertaken any experiments or observations himself, and his opinions are therefore necessarily theoretical. It seems to dignify work like this overmuch to collect it into a book and give it a title that induces the reader to suppose that it contains the results of original investigations. The proper place for such essays is in the columns of the magazines, where they serve to while away an idle hour and are not mistaken for serious scientific work.

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#### NOTES AND NEWS

HISTORIC DOCUMENTS FROM THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY B. C.—Since 1892, when the original text and translations of the clay tablets of Tell-el-Amarna were first published by the press, the insight into their importance for ancient history has steadily increased, and recently some writer has even declared them the most valuable documents for Oriental historiography of the pre-Islamic epoch. Shortly after the discovery of the tablets the

largest number were purchased by the Museum of Berlin and published by it in 1892. There were 160 tablets, many of them in a fragmentary condition. The British Museum obtained 82 tablets, the majority in a perfect state of preservation. The trustees of that institution published them the same year. The Boulaq Museum at Gizeh, owned by the Egyptian government, has 60 of these precious relics, and a few only passed into the hands of private persons. Most of our readers are familiar with the fact that these tablets are written in Assyrian and contain the diplomatic correspondence between Egyptian subjects in Phœnicia, Palestine, and the East with two kings of Egypt of the fifteenth century B. C. Amenophis the Third (the last pharaoh of the XVIII dynasty) and Amenophis the Fourth, called the "heretic" because he introduced a sort of solar monotheism after a Babylonian model. Not only was this royal act a great shock to the utterly conservative Egyptian mind, but the transfer of the government seat from Thebes to a site near the present Tell-el-Amarna must have proved still more offensive. In the ruins of this ephemeral capital, about 150 miles south of Cairo, the clay tablets were found. Their text has just been reëdited in a thoroughly revised form by Professor Hugo Winckler, translated into German and English, and published by Reuther and Reichard, Berlin, of whose "Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek" it forms volume 5. Considering the manifold difficulties which still encumber the full understanding of these messages, the editor confesses that his edition can only be regarded as a transitory essay for something better to come. A new comparative study of all the originals was needed to clear up doubtful passages and to obtain the correct readings. Many texts are worded in an orthography partially faulty or fanciful, or were impressed into the soft clay with more imperfect tools than the regulation "chisel," while others have suffered by breaks at the edges. There are many words and phrases not fully understood yet, in spite of the help afforded to their study by the other monuments we have in the Assyrian dialect of this Semitic language, which shows the most ancient forms of all the dialects of the Semitic stock. Winckler has transcribed the texts by Roman letters. He separated all the syllables expressed by *one* cuneiform group-sign by hyphens, and every word commencing a new line is marked by a separate number in the Assyrian text, as well as in the translations. Long vowels are distinguished as such by

the macron. The authors of these messages placed their names, titles, and signatures *at the head* of the missive, like the Greeks and Romans, and not at the end of them, as Europeans have done since the beginning of the middle ages. The usual modes of allocution to kings and princes were set formulas of an official character, and appear to us rather servile, as the "dust of thy feet," "seven and seven times I fall down before you." The central power in Egypt must have been at that time weak and irresolute, for many of the tablets report seditions, open revolts, and intrigues against the king and his vassals in the provinces, robberies and devastations perpetrated by the revolting chiefs. Other tablets enumerate at length the tributes destined or sent to Khuen-aten, "Glory of the sun-disk," the royal name assumed by Amenophis IV; and when princesses and women of noble birth were married from Egypt to foreign potentates their trousseaus and escorts are described at length. Many towns of Phœnicia are mentioned, but in a form rather puzzling to Bible readers. Thus Beirut is called Biruna, Birutu, Tyrus; Sur-ri, Sidon; Zimrida, Canaan; Kina-ahna and Kinahi, Gaza; Hazati, Azzati, Jaffa (Joppa) Yapu; and Memphis, Hikubta.

The locality east of the Nile where, in 1887, an Egyptian peasant woman found the first of these tablets, has since then been ransacked repeatedly, though nothing of any consequence was found; but the gains already derived from this find (Winckler has 296 numbers) are so great for science that we may be thankful for this opportunity to set us thinking and studying about so many new facts and problems. To help further research the editor has added a glossary of words on 34 pages and a list of proper names of persons and places on 8 pages. The other volumes of the "Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek," under the editorship of Professor Eberhard Schrader, contains historic, administrative, commercial, and poetic texts in large numbers, which will be of appreciable assistance to the students of the Tell-el-Amarna tablets, for they are worded in Assyrian also. The recent discoveries of inscriptions at Nippur, near the Persian gulf, has brought to light monuments believed to date five to seven thousand years before<sup>1</sup> our era, a fact which cannot fail to stimulate the study of cuneiform literature in an unprecedented degree.

A. S. GATSCHET.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. last annual report of the Archeological Institute, Boston, Mass.

THE TARASCO LANGUAGE of Michoacan, western Mexico, has been recorded and published in vocabularies, grammars, and religious texts at various times since 1551. In the year named a Franciscan missionary, Juan B. B. de Lagunas, issued the first compendium of the language in the City of Mexico. He was followed, in 1559, by Fray M. Gilberti, and, as the Indians speaking Tarasco formed a very considerable population, many apostles of the Catholic faith were sent to reclaim these natives for Christianity. The Tarasco language is spoken in almost all parts of Michoacan and northward into the state of Guanajuato. The early territorial capital of the tribe was Tzintzuntan; the site of the present capital, Morelia, was then called Juagangaro. The local names throughout this territory end frequently in *-ro*, which forms a locative case; thus Querétaro signifies "at the place of the ball-play." The Nahuatl people under the leadership of the Aztecs attacked them, but never succeeded in subjugating them. An ancient and highly interesting Spanish account, which probably belongs to the period between 1570 and 1590, bears the title "*Ritos y ceremonias del antiguo reino de Michoacan*;" the anonymous author has added illustrations to the text in water-colors. It is preserved in the Library of Congress at Washington, and a revised copy of the work is in possession of Dr Nicolas León. That gentleman has for several years been the editor of the *Museo Michoacano*, an octavo periodical, and has published therein many interesting and valuable historical articles, which have been the means of directing the attention of the scientific world to the isolated Tarasco people.

Through the joint efforts of Dr León and the French linguist, Raoul de la Grasserie, study of the Tarasco language has recently been resumed, and the results of their researches are now presented to students of linguistics in a more scientific form than has previously been the case. The work appears under the title, *Langue tarasque; grammaire, dictionnaire—textes traduits et analysés par Raoul de la Grasserie et Nicolas León. Paris: J. Maisonneuve, 1896.* (8°, pp. 293.) The volume forms number 19 of the *Bibliothèque linguistique américaine*.

The definitions of the words and the rendering of the religious texts are in French, and are arranged in double columns. By this work the study of the Tarasco language is greatly facilitated.

A. S. GATSCHET.